

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the following claims as indicated by entering the underlined matter and deleting the matter lined through:

1. (Previously presented) An apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses suspended from shackles from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, comprising:

a transfer wheel having a perimeter rotatable about a vertical axis for positioning between the first and the second overhead conveyors,

said transfer wheel being provided with carcass holders at the perimeter of the transfer wheel that are movable with the transfer wheel and revolve about the vertical axis of the transfer wheel, said carcass holders being rotatable with respect to said transfer wheel,

holder orientation means operatively associated with said transfer wheel configured for rotating the carcass holders with respect to the transfer wheel and for equalizing the rotational orientation of the carcass holders from receipt of the carcasses on the transfer wheel to the discharge of the carcasses from the transfer wheel, the initial rotational orientation and the final rotational orientation of the carcasses being identical relative to the first overhead conveyor and to the second overhead conveyor.

2. (Currently amended) An apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses suspended from shackles from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, comprising:

a transfer wheel having a perimeter rotatable about a vertical axis for positioning between the first and the second overhead conveyors,

said transfer wheel being provided with carcass holders at the perimeter of the transfer wheel that are movable with the transfer wheel and revolve about the vertical axis of the transfer wheel, said carcass holders being rotatable with respect to said transfer wheel,

holder orientation means operatively associated with said transfer wheel configured for rotating the carcass holders with respect to the transfer wheel and for equalizing the rotational orientation of the carcass holders from receipt of the carcasses on the transfer wheel to the discharge of the carcasses from the transfer wheel, the initial rotational orientation and the final rotational orientation of the carcasses being identical relative to the first overhead conveyor and to

the second overhead conveyor ~~An apparatus according to claim 1,~~ wherein the orientation means is adapted for keeping the rotational orientation of the carcass in the holder constant throughout the transport on the transfer wheel.

3. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein each of said holders is bearing mounted in the transfer wheel to be rotatable about themselves about a vertical axis.

4. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 3, the orientation means being adapted for relative rotation of the holders with respect to the transfer wheel.

5. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the orientation means is adapted for rotating the holders 1:1 with respect to the rotation of the transfer wheel from receipt to discharge of the carcasses from the transfer wheel.

6. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, the orientation means comprising the first orientation means for orienting a first of the holders, and second orientation means for orienting others of the holders, which second orientation means are operated by the first orientation means.

7. (Currently amended) An apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses suspended from shackles from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, comprising:
a transfer wheel having a perimeter rotatable about a vertical axis for positioning between the first and the second overhead conveyors,

said transfer wheel being provided with carcass holders at the perimeter of the transfer wheel that are movable with the transfer wheel and revolve about the vertical axis of the transfer wheel, said carcass holders being rotatable with respect to said transfer wheel,

holder orientation means operatively associated with said transfer wheel configured for rotating the carcass holders with respect to the transfer wheel and for equalizing the rotational orientation of the carcass holders from receipt of the carcasses on the transfer wheel to the discharge of the carcasses from the transfer wheel, the initial rotational orientation and the final

rotational orientation of the carcasses being identical relative to the first overhead conveyor and to the second overhead conveyor,

~~An apparatus according to claim 6,~~ the transfer wheel being connected to a vertical shaft in a rotatably fixed manner, the shaft being rotatable about the vertical axis, the first orientation means comprising a first driving disc provided on the first holder, a second driving disc placed loosely on the shaft but retained in spacial orientation, and a driving belt or driving chain running circumferentially about both said first and second driving discs.

8. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 7, the diameter of both driving discs being equal.

9. (Cancelled)

10 (Currently amended) An apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses suspended from shackles from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, comprising:

a transfer wheel having a perimeter rotatable about a vertical axis for positioning between the first and the second overhead conveyors,

said transfer wheel being provided with carcass holders at the perimeter of the transfer wheel that are movable with the transfer wheel and revolve about the vertical axis of the transfer wheel, said carcass holders being rotatable with respect to said transfer wheel,

holder orientation means operatively associated with said transfer wheel configured for rotating the carcass holders with respect to the transfer wheel and for equalizing the rotational orientation of the carcass holders from receipt of the carcasses on the transfer wheel to the discharge of the carcasses from the transfer wheel, the initial rotational orientation and the final rotational orientation of the carcasses being identical relative the first overhead conveyor,

the orientation means comprising the first orientation means for orienting a first of the holders, and second orientation means for orienting others of the holders, which second orientation means are operated by the first orientation means, and

the second orientation means comprising a first toothed wheel that is attached to the first holder in a rotably fixed manner, a central toothed wheel freely rotatable on a ~~the~~ shaft and

driven by the first toothed wheel, and second toothed wheels each attached in a rotably fixed manner to the other holders, which second toothed wheels are in driven engagement with the central toothed wheel.

11. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the second toothed wheels each having a diameter that is equal to the diameter of the first toothed wheel.

12. (Currently amended) An apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, in which overhead conveyors the carcasses are transported suspended from shackles comprising:

a transfer wheel rotatable about a vertical axis and positioned between both the first and the second overhead conveyors,

said transfer ~~wheels~~ wheel being provided with holders for the carcasses radially spaced from said vertical axis of said transfer wheel and movable with the transfer wheel about the vertical axis and each holder having a an upwardly extending central shaft about which it rotates, and

orientation means responsive to the rotation of said transfer wheel for rotating each of said holders about its respective central shaft and with respect to the transfer wheel during the transport of the holders by the transfer wheel from the first overhead conveyor to the second overhead conveyor,

such that the poultry carcasses received by the holders are delivered by the holders to the second overhead conveyor in the same rotational orientation as received from the first overhead conveyor.

13. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the orientation means is adapted for 1:1 continuous rotation of the holders with respect to the transfer wheel.

14. (Previously presented) A holder for suspended transport of a poultry carcass comprising:

a shackle for suspending a poultry carcass by its legs, the shackle defining a pair of open ended accommodation spaces sized and shaped for receiving the legs of the carcass,

the distance between the accommodation spaces at their one end being different from the distance therebetween at their other end,

such that the legs of a carcass can be inserted into one end of the accommodation spaces, the carcass suspended by its legs from the holder and carried by the holder to another location, and the legs removed from the other end of the accommodation spaces.

15. (Previously presented) A holder according to claim 14, and further including inclined turned end members being arranged on either side of one end of the accommodation spaces to prevent unintentional backwards movement of the legs.

16. (Previously presented) A holder according to claim 14, and further including inclined turned end members being arranged on either side of said one end of the accommodation spaces to prevent unintentional backwards movement of the legs out of said one end of the accommodation spaces.

17. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the holders are provided with accommodation spaces for the legs of the carcass, the accommodation spaces each forming an open-ended horizontal slit.

18. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 17, wherein the distance between the accommodation spaces of said holders at their one end of said holders being different from the distance therebetween at their other end of said holders.

19. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the holders are provided with accommodation spaces for the legs of the carcass, the accommodation spaces each forming an open ended horizontal slit.

20. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the distance between the accommodation spaces of said holders at their one end is different from the distance therebetween at their other end.

21. (Previously presented and allowed) An apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, comprising:

a transfer wheel rotatable about a shaft and having a perimeter, said transfer wheel disposed between the first and the second overhead conveyors;

a carcass receipt point and a carcass discharge point, the carcass receipt point being disposed between the first overhead conveyor and the transfer wheel, the carcass discharge point being disposed between the transfer wheel and the second overhead conveyor;

a plurality of holders, each holder being rotatably mounted on said transfer wheel at the perimeter of the transfer wheel and configured to receive one of the carcasses from the first overhead conveyor at the carcass receipt point and to discharge the carcass to the second overhead conveyor at the carcass discharge point; and

holder orientation means responsive to the continuous rotation of said transfer wheel for continuously rotating said holders in unison with respect to said transfer wheel;

said holder orientation means configured so that each carcass received by a holder maintains its rotational orientation as received at the carcass receipt point continuously until delivered to the carcass discharge point.

22. (Previously presented and allowed) The apparatus according to claim 21, and further including a toothed wheel engaging each holder for rotating each holder in unison in response to the rotation of said transfer wheel.

23. (Previously presented and allowed) The apparatus according to claim 21, wherein each holder is operatively connected to the other holders and each holder maintains a constant orientation relative to the other holders as it rotates with respect to the transfer wheel.

24. (Currently amended) An apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, comprising:

a transfer wheel positioned between said first and second overhead conveyors, said transfer wheel having a central axis and a perimeter rotatable about said central axis,

a plurality of bird holders spaced about said perimeter of said transfer wheel for receiving poultry carcasses from said first overhead conveyor and carrying poultry carcasses from said first overhead conveyor about said central axis to said second overhead conveyor and delivering carcasses to said second overhead conveyor, and

orientation control means responsive to the rotation of said transfer wheel for rotating the bird holders with respect to the transfer wheel about an upwardly extending axis and for equalizing the rotational orientation of the bird holders about the upwardly extending axis from receipt of the carcasses on the transfer wheel to the discharge of the carcasses from the transfer wheel.